

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /118 W

----- 107418

R 181429Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8407

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 09399

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: PERSONALITIES
OF THE LEADING CANDIDATES

1. SUMMARY. THE MAY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE CLOSE, WITH THE PERSONALITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE. FOLLOWING ARE PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS OF THE THREE CANDIDATES WHO WILL DOMINATE THE CAMPAIGN: CHABAN-DELMAS, GISCARD D'ESTAING AND MITTERRAND. THEIR POLICY VIEWS WILL BE TREATED IN SEPARATE MESSAGES. END SUMMARY.

2. JACQUES CHABAN-DELMAS. ACTIVE INFRENCH POLITICS SINCE 1945, CHABAN-DELMAS EXUDES YOUTH AND DYNAMISM AT THE AGE OF 59. HE HAS BEEN AN INFLUENTIAL NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE THROUGHOUT THE FOURTH AND FIFTH REPUBLICS. HE IS REGARDED AS A FAITHFUL, BUT FLEXIBLE GAULLIST. OBSERVERS CITE HIS PRAGMATISM AND HIS ABILITY TO MANEUVER AND COOPERATE WITH DISPARATE POLITICAL GROUPS
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AS HIS MAJOR STRENGTHS. IF ELECTED PRESIDENT, HE WILL

FOLLOW THE MAIN THRUSTS OF FRENCH FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY. IN ORDER TO PUT HIS PERSONAL STAMP ON HIS GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, HE COULD ADOPT A LESS ABRASIVE TONE TOWARD THE US AND WESTERN EUROPE WITHOUT DEPARTING FROM GAULLIST PRINCIPLES.

3. CHABAN IS A CAPABLE POLITICIAN, HE HAS SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH A BRAIN TRUST OF YOUNG FORWARD-LOOKING INTELLECTUALS AND HAS SET UP STUDY TEAMS ON THE SUBJECTS OF FINANCE, LABOR, COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND DEFENSE. HIS PRINCIPAL CONTRIBUTION TO GAULLISM HAS BEEN A POLITICAL PROGRAM,

THE "NEW SOCIETY," DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO THE LOWER CLASSES AND TO PEOPLE OF THE CENTER AND THE LEFT. IT ATTEMPTS TO ALTER THE COUNTRY'S PRESENT RIGID AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE BY INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN THEIR FACTORIES, INCREASING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVING SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFITS. AS PRIME MINISTER, CHABAN WAS MAINLY CONCERNED WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, SINCE UNDER POMPIDOU FOREIGN POLICY WAS MAINLY THE PRESERVE OF THE PRESIDENT AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTER. CHABAN IS INTERESTED IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HOWEVER, AND INSISTS ON PRESERVING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC AND FRANCE'S INDEPENDENT ROLE IN THE WORLD. CHABAN WAS THE SUBJECT OF A SCANDAL IN 1972 WHEN IT WAS REVEALED THAT HE HAD -- PERFECTLY LEGALLY -- AVOIDED PAYING TAXES ON HIS SUBSTANTIAL INCOME. WHILE THIS AFFAIR MAY COUNT SOMEWHAT AGAINST HIM IN THE MINDS OF FRENCH VOTERS, TAX AVOIDANCE IS AN ANCIENT FRENCH NATIONAL PASTIME AND THE NET EFFECT IS EXPECTED TO BE MINIMAL.

4. CHABAN GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF BEING SELF-ASSURED AND SINCERE. A TALENTED ATHLETE, TENNIS ACE, AND ONCE AN INTERNATIONAL RUGBY PLAYER, HE CARRIES HIS SPORTING IMAGE TO THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. KNOWN AS FRANCE'S POLITICAL SPRINTER (HE LIKES TO CLIMB STAIRS TWO AT A TIME), HIS SPEECHES ARE MARKED BY SPORTING TERMS SUCH AS CONFIDENTIAL

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TEAM AND FAIR PLAY. YOUTHFUL AND ATTRACTIVE IN HIS APPEARANCE, HIS KENNEDY-LIKE FEATURES, HIS BREEZY MANNER AND HIS VERBAL FACILITY MAKE A STRONG COMBINATION IN THIS TELEVISION AGE OF POLITICS. HE IS HAMPERED SOMEWHAT, HOWEVER, BY HIS HIGH-PITCHED VOICE. CHABAN WAS MARRIED IN 1971 TO HIS THIRD WIFE, MICHELINE, WHO IS YOUNG, VIVACIOUS AND RESEMBLES THE AMERICAN ACTRESS ALI MCGRAW.

CHABAN HAS A LIMITED COMMAND OF ENGLISH. HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR TOTAL HONESTY AND INTEGRITY.

5. VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING. A GRADUATE OF BOTH THE ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE AND THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION, TWO OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN FRANCE, THE FORTY-EIGHT YEAR OLD GISCARD IS PATRICIAN, BRILLIANT, DYNAMIC AND AMBITIOUS.

6. THROUGHOUT HIS POLITICAL CAREER GISCARD HAS ADROITLY STEERED A COURSE OF SEMI-INDEPENDENCE FROM THE GAULLISTS WHILE KEEPING HIS INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY WITHIN THE MAJORITY, EVEN GOING SO FAR AS TO CRITICIZE DE GAULLE IN 1967 FOR HIS "SOLITARY"

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SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /118 W

----- 107419

R 181429Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 09399

MANNER OF RULING. HIS RESPECT FOR INDEPENDENCE AND

INTELLECTUAL RIGOR, PERHAPS A VESTIGE OF HIS TRAINING, HAS REPEATEDLY LED HIM TO CALL FOR THE CREATION OF A VIABLE, NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION. GISCARD IS A SUPERB TECHNOCRAT WITH AN AWESOME CAPACITY FOR DENSE, STATISTIC-FILLED SPEECHES APPARENTLY DELIVERED FROM MEMORY. THESE VERY SKILLS HAVE PREVENTED HIM FROM BEING "HUMANIZED" AS A CANDIDATE; PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF THIS, HE HAS DEVELOPED INTO ONE OF THE FOREMOST PRACTITIONERS AMONG GOVERNMENT MINISTERS OF THE TELEVISION APPEARANCE. GISCARD IS REPORTED TO BE AN EARNEST STUDENT OF THE 1960 CAMPAIGN OF THE LATE PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT HIM TO RUN HIS RACE IN A HIGHLY ENERGETIC STYLE.

7. GISCARD'S CAREER HAS BEEN ALMOST ENTIRELY IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE, WITH TWO LONG TERMS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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SERVICE AS FINANCE MINISTER (1962-66 AND 1969 TO DATE). THUS HE IS IDENTIFIED IN THE MINDS OF THE FRENCH PUBLIC WITH BOTH THE SUCCESSES AND THE FAILURES OF THE FRENCH

RECENTLY HE HAS PRESIDED OVER A PERIOD OF RAPID PRICE INFLATION, AND THIS IS CERTAIN TO BE A POINT OF ATTACK BY HIS OPPONENTS. OF THE THREE CANDIDATES, GISCARD HAS HAD THE MOST EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELDS OF MONETARY AND FISCAL POLICY.

8. GISCARD ENJOYS THE USUAL SPORTS OF THE NEW FRENCH ARISTOCRACY: HE SKIS, HUNTS, PILOTS HIS OWN PLANE AND IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC MEMBER OF SEVERAL PARISIAN POLO AND TENNIS CLUBS. HE SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH.

9. FRANCOIS MITTERRAND. PLAGUED FOR MANY YEARS BY THE LINGERING IMAGE OF A FOXY AND UNPRINCIPLED POLITICIAN, MITTERRAND HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL RECENTLY IN PROJECTING A MORE STATESMAN-LIKE IMAGE. IN FIRM CONTROL OF HIS PARTY AND PRESERVING A CERTAIN DISTANCE FROM THE HURLY-BURLY OF DAY-TO-DAY POLITICS, MITTERRAND, AT 57, HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE TIME TO CONTEMPLATE HIS FUTURE. SEVERAL

FAMILY FRIENDS HAVE NOTED HIS INCREASINGLY INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE LEFT IN FRENCH AFFAIRS. ONE FREQUENTLY CITED EXAMPLE HAS MITTERRAND TELLING HIS STAFF AND CLOSEST POLITICAL ADVISORS THAT EVEN THOUGH HE FINDS THE COMMON PROGRAM WITH THE COMMUNISTS SOMEWHAT IMPRACTICAL AND FEELS THAT HE COULD MAKE A VERY STRONG SHOWING WITHOUT IT, HE IS RELUCTANT TO PULL AWAY FROM THE SOCIA-

LIST/COMMUNIST MARRIAGE FOR FEAR OF ONCE MORE OPENING THE FRENCH LEFT TO DISUNITY. HE APPEARS CONVINCED THAT HIS SOCIALIST MOVEMENT CAN ONLY ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AND TRULY REPRESENT THE FRENCH WORKING CLASS WITH THE HELP OF THE COMMUNISTS.

10. MITTERRAND IS SAID TO ADMIRE ONLY A VERY FEW POLITICAL FIGURES: WILLY BRANDT, LEON BLUM, PIERRE MENDES-FRANCE AND GOLDA MEIR. FROM SOME OF THEM HE HAS DRAWN LESSONS OF POLITICAL FLEXIBILITY AND INTELLECTUAL RIGOR
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AS WELL AS THE FOR HIM MORE EMOTIONALLY GRATIFYING ROLE OF BEING THE CONSCIENCE OF HIS PARTY. IN RECENT YEARS MITTERRAND HAS BECOME MORE INTERESTED IN THE ABSTRACT NOTION OF JUSTICE AND HAS BEEN HEARD TO QUOTE APPROVINGLY-

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SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /118 W

----- 107527

R 181429Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 09399

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN'S QUESTION: "I KNOW IT'S JUST, BUT IS IT FAIR?" SEVERAL OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED, PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF THIS NEW CONCERN, MITTERRAND'S TENDENCY TO AVOID MAKING PERSONAL ATTACKS AS WELL AS BECOMING DISCONCERTED WHEN HIMSELF ATTACKED ON A PERSONAL LEVEL.

11. MITTERRAND'S VIEW OF HIMSELF IS PRIMARILY ABSTRACT. HE NEITHER CLAIMS NOR POSSESSES ANY GREAT EXPERTISE OR INTEREST IN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS; FOR THESE HE IS CONTENT TO RELY UPON JACQUES ATTALI, PROFESSOR AT THE ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE, AND OTHER ADVISORS. HE HAS ASSEMBLED A TEAM OF ADVISORS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY FIELD AS WELL. VERBALLY ANTI-SOVIET AND MILDLY PRO-AMERICAN, MITTERRAND COUNTS AMONG HIS CURRENT PREOCCUPATIONS THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION, WHICH HE PARADOXICALLY FINDS BEYOND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTROL BY ANY ONE COUNTRY WHILE
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SIMULTANEOUSLY SUGGESTING THAT THE US TAKE FIRM STEPS TO CONTROL ITS OWN MNC'S. MITTERRAND VIEWS HIMSELF AS A SORT OF MANAGER OF TEAMS OF EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS,

ALL CONTRIBUTING TECHNICAL DATA FOR HIS SYNTHESIS AND COUNSEL.

12. IN THE PAST YEAR MITTERRAND HAS INCREASED HIS VISITS TO OTHER COUNTRIES, SEEKING TO ENHANCE HIS CREDIBILITY AS A STATESMAN. MITTERRAND'S ENGLISH IS VERY LIMITED. HIS PRINCIPAL HOBBY IS READING, PARTICULARLY THE MODERN FRENCH NOVEL, ALTHOUGH HE HAS A VORACIOUS APPETITE FOR A WIDE RANGE OF INTELLECTUAL SUBJECTS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, PARTY LINE, ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PARIS09399
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740090-0463
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740433/aaaabdpap.tel
Line Count: 318
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: PERSONALITIES OF THE LEADING CANDIDATES
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR, (CHABAN-DELMAS), (GISCARD D'ESTAING), (MITTERRAND), (ROYER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005